

Frequently Asked Questions on the Issue of e-Certs for Hong Kong-Registered Ships

1. What is an e-Cert?

- An e-Cert, just like a paper certificate, is a statutory document issued by the Marine Department (MD) in Portable Document Format (PDF). In line with the proposal in the Policy Address to promote the use of e-Certs, the MD will convert the certificates, licences and permits issued by the Department for Hong Kong-registered ships to e-Certs.

Basic Information on an e-Cert

- The basic information on an e-Cert includes a unique tracking number, QR code, MD digital signature and verification instructions.
- Unique Tracking Number: A unique tracking number is used to differentiate individual e-Certs, but does not replace the existing certificate number. Once any permitted changes are made to the e-Cert, a new unique tracking number will be assigned to it.
- QR code: Users can scan the QR code to link to the MD's website where they can enter the name of the certificate and the unique tracking number (if applicable) to check the validity of the e-Cert.
- MD Digital Signature: The digital signature of the MD will appear on the e-Cert. The digital certificate used for this digital signature is issued by a certification authority recognized under the Electronic Transactions Ordinance (Cap. 553) of Hong Kong.
- Verification Instructions: The verification instructions provide users with the method of verifying an e-Cert and the relevant website. Users can follow the verification instructions to visit the MD's website and enter the certificate name and unique tracking number to verify the validity of the e-Cert.

2. What is the difference between an e-Cert and a paper certificate?

- An e-Cert is an electronic file while a paper certificate is a physical document.

e-Cert

- As an e-Cert is an electronic file that can be copied and printed for

an unlimited number of times, there is theoretically no original hard copy of an e-Cert. An e-Cert will be considered valid as long as the version of the certificate is verified by a designated website.

Paper Certificates

- As paper certificates are issued by officers of the MD under their own signature, theoretically there will only be one original certificate.
3. Which certificates, licences or permits need to be converted to e-Cert?
 - The e-Cert is applicable to all certificates, licences and permits issued by the MD for Hong Kong-registered ships.
 4. Why switch to e-Cert?
 - The 2021 Policy Address promotes the use of e-Certs to cope with the Government's objective of digitization of public services. In addition, as an international shipping centre, Hong Kong has been implementing measures in various fronts to strengthen marine and shipping services. The current legislative amendments will further improve the services of the Hong Kong Shipping Registry, which is the fourth largest register in the world in terms of gross tonnage, by providing a higher degree of convenience to shipowners and seafarers in applying for and receiving certificates.
 5. How to apply for / switch to e-Cert?
 - After the implementation of e-Cert, the MD will only issue e-Certs for renewal, replacement or other requests.


Arrangements for transition to e-Cert

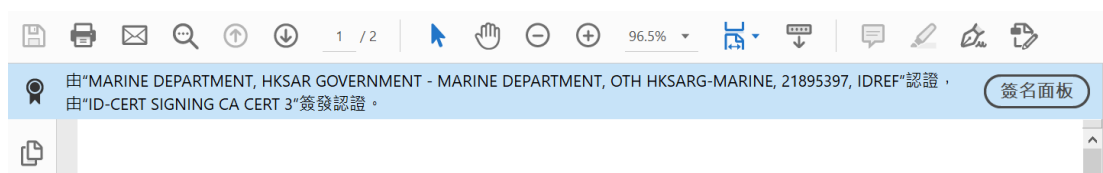
- e-Certs can generally be obtained by accessing the MD's website and logging on to the e-Business System to submit applications for application/renewal/replacement of certificates.
6. How can I verify the e-Cert?
 - (a) On the web browser, enter the verification website of the MD. Select the type of certificate and enter the unique tracking number of the

certificate¹; or

- (b) Scan the QR code on the certificate to link to the verification website of the MD. The type of certificate and the unique tracking number of the certificate will be automatically filled in. The input of further information² may be required for some certificates.
- (c) Enter the Captcha code appears on the screen.
- (d) The information on the certificate (e.g. whether the certificate is valid or not, the name of the vessel, ship's numbers and names of seafarers) will be displayed.

7. How to make sure that my e-Cert has not been tampered with?

- The e-Cert will be issued with the digital signature of the MD and the digital certificate with such digital signature will be certified by a recognized certification authority. As shown in the figure below, a black ribbon icon  with the name of the MD will appear on the blue band in the upper left corner of the e-Cert's screen, representing a valid certified signature, and the signature panel will also show information about the digital signature on the document. If the document has been tampered with, the black ribbon icon will either disappear or indicate that other changes have been made. In the above circumstance, the digital signature can only be viewed when the PDF file is opened on a computer.



8. Apart from the online verification service, are there any other ways of verification?
- No. The MD only provides online checking service.

¹ Additional information of the certificate may be required for some certificates, such as date of issue or IMO ship identification number.

² Further information refers to information such as seafarer certificate number, date of birth or date of issue.

9. Can I choose not to use e-Cert after its implementation?
 - With the implementation of e-Cert, the MD will only issue e-Cert. Physical copies of e-Certs will only be provided upon special request.